

## **DRAFT**

### **Recognition of Teaching Excellence – Report to the U21 Educational Innovation Pre-conference Workshop, Edinburgh, 28 October 2015**

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One of the work programmes of the Universitas 21 Educational Innovation Cluster has been focussed on the ways in which research-intensive universities express the value they place on teaching excellence. The first part of this programme analysed web-based information from a sample of U21 universities to understand the messages they are communicating about teaching through their policies, procedures and structures. The report<sup>1</sup> drew attention to different career progression pathways (teaching and research, teaching only), to a gap between aspirations for the importance of the teaching-research nexus and its implementation, to different interpretations of the nature and importance of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL), to the use of largely general language in the description of standards for teaching, and to the variety of rewards, grants and fellowships offered to raise the status of teaching. Following discussion of this first report at the U21 EI Cluster meeting at UNSW in October 2014 it was decided that a more detailed analysis was required if, as a network, we were to work towards a shared understanding of what we value in teaching. We have such an understanding about research but the first report showed that we have some way to go to match this in teaching. This report is the outcome of that more detailed analysis.

#### **Aims**

The aims of this ongoing project are:

- to develop a shared understanding of what, as a network, we value in teaching.
- to enable better understanding of the evidence base that U21 universities require to warrant claims of teaching quality and teaching excellence at the level of Professor.

#### **Rationale**

The rationale for these aims at the outset of the project was to provide a basis for informed referee comment on applications for Professor in our various universities. There was agreement in our meeting at UNSW that we often struggled to find external referees who could comment knowledgeably on the teaching component of applications for Professorial promotions – on both the teaching and research track, and on the teaching-only track (Professor of Teaching). A shared understanding of teaching and of teaching excellence could form the basis for referees, nominated from across the network, to make assessments of applications for Professorship.

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<sup>1</sup> Aitken, G. & Tatebe, J. (2014). U21 Recognition of Teaching Excellence Discussion Paper. U21 EI Conference, UNSW.

While this rationale has been the driving force for this project as it has developed a number of other rationale have emerged. These are described in the final section of the report.

### **Approach**

Teaching has its highest-stake expression in promotion policies and procedures. It was decided therefore that this more detailed analysis of teaching excellence would focus on two sets of documents:

- promotion policies and their related standards and procedures
- a sample of successful applications for promotion from across the network and across disciplines.

The iterative nature of this analysis began with a range of academic promotion material across international systems, disciplines (Arts: History, Politics, Geography, Planning; Education: Language & literacy; Engineering: Civil, Structural & Environmental; Library Studies; Medicine; Science: Zoology, Microbiology; Mathematics, Statistics, Computer Science), career levels (Instructor, Lecturer/Assistant Professor through to Associate Professor), and academic tracks (research or teaching).

The documents were initially analysed and the key findings (see Preliminary Report - next section) informed a two-day workshop discussion in London in April 2015<sup>2</sup>. At this workshop the focus shifted to the consideration of three main questions:

- how is teaching defined?
- what are the main dimensions of teaching?
- what is the nature of the evidence we would expect to see to warrant claims of teaching excellence?

### **Preliminary Report**

The preliminary report<sup>3</sup> presented an analysis of promotion policy documents, associated guides and promotion applications identifying common characteristics and patterns, interesting outliers and promising practices – each illustrated with reference to an example from a promotion document or promotion application<sup>4</sup>. Nine high level conclusions were drawn from this analysis.

1. There was significant variation across the network in promotion processes, application format and required information with the format and requirements sometimes varying between departments/faculties within universities.

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<sup>2</sup> Attended by representatives from Glasgow, UCD, Edinburgh, UBC, Lund, UNSW and Auckland

<sup>3</sup> The Preliminary Report, written by Dr Jennifer Tatebe (University of Auckland), is described only in summary form in this document to preserve the anonymity of those who promotion portfolios formed the basis of the original analysis.

<sup>4</sup> Policy documents and/or teaching portfolios were provided by UCD, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Lund, NUS, UBC, McGill, UNSW, Queensland and Auckland.

2. Recognition of teaching based on the sample of successful applications was difficult to determine because they varied so widely within and between institutions.
3. Honours and postgraduate supervision was variously classified as a research activity and a teaching activity.
4. Universities with more structured promotion application forms with required sections on teaching and learning signalled more formal recognition of teaching. For example, University of New South Wales (UNSW) Form B: Research and Teaching Related Activities required applicants to comment on the following teaching activities: course title & level, form of teaching, hours, and contribution and impact.
5. There was considerable underlying commonality between the general criteria used for promotion on teaching although the specific framing of this varied – for example, UNSW’s reference to “Teaching Practice” was substantively similar to Edinburgh’s “Direct Contribution”.
6. Beyond the high level of general commonality there was considerable variation in the ways particular activities were classified – for example, the securing of grants for teaching was variously classified as evidence of Esteem, as evidence of Innovation and as evidence of Knowledge Exchange or Transfer.
7. Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) contributions were presented at very different levels - from participation in a variety of university led academic development workshops, to self-reflection about teaching practices, through to conference presentation and publication in higher education journals.
8. There was a great deal of variety in the type of evidence used to support claims of teaching excellence.
9. There was little emphasis in teaching criteria on the experimental nature of practice or on learning from, and changing practice as a result of, evidence from students – including learning from failure and from challenging teaching contexts.

On the basis of the analysis and in order to make some sense of the variety of approaches to describing teaching and learning excellence an overview of themes, sub-themes and related evidence was developed (see Table 1).

*Table 1: Themes, sub-themes and related evidence of teaching effectiveness*

Themes	Sub-themes (where relevant)	Examples of Evidence
Teaching philosophy/Teaching Rationale		A written statement about approach to teaching and reasons for that approach.
Teaching Practice/Direct Contribution	Course planning, design and development including development of course materials.	List of courses taught.  Examples of course materials – annotated to identify key elements of learning design.  Publication of a text book.
	Programme leadership	Leadership of an internal programme review.  Invitation to review programmes in another university.
	Student Support	Introduction of a significant new practice – for example, peer mentoring.
	Intellectual challenge	Peer critique of teaching materials.  Student evaluations.
	Innovation	Re-design of a course in a new way – e.g. MOOC development.  Use of technology in teaching – e.g. LMS, simulations, Youtube, blogs
	Collaboration	Examples of team teaching.  Examples of cross-disciplinary teaching.
Impact on students		Student results – pre and post-testing.  Exemplary student work.  Peer observation.  Student evaluations.
Improving/Developing Teaching	Own teaching	Evidence of changes in student achievement.  Evidence of changes to practice as a result of peer observation.  Completion of a qualification in teaching.  Explaining the impact of a professional development programme on own

		teaching.
	Of colleagues	Mentoring colleagues in teaching.  Reviewing colleagues teaching.  Contributing to/leading departmental reviews of teaching and programmes.  Initiating a step-change in learning and teaching.
	In a formal role	Evidence of improvements in teaching and learning in a role as a Director of Teaching or as a Head of Department.  Member/Leader of an organisation/national body with responsibility for advancing teaching and learning in high education.
Dissemination of Excellence/Knowledge Transfer/Knowledge Exchange		Invited lectures on pedagogy  Textbook sales.  Tedx Terrytalks (UBC).  Youtube hits  Activity on Twitter and on blogs about teaching and learning.  Publications in in-house journals/magazines.  Publication in journals on higher education teaching and learning.  Authoring/editing books on teaching and learning.  Membership/leadership of a teaching and learning network  Organising a conference on teaching and learning.  Contribution to policy change in faculty, university, public body as it relates to teaching and learning in high education.
Esteem and Recognition		Invitations to deliver master classes on teaching and learning at international colloquia  Invitation to judge a teaching competition.  Invitation to review a programme.

		<p>Invited lecture.</p> <p>Winning an award for teaching and learning – department, faculty, university, national, international</p> <p>Winning a Teaching Fellowship</p> <p>International visiting professorships in teaching and learning.</p>
Funding		<p>Securing external funding for the development of a teaching project.</p> <p>Consultancy on teaching and learning.</p> <p>Successful commercialisation of a scholarship of teaching output – e.g. online resources or programme</p>

### **London Workshop**

Using the Preliminary Report as a starting point the London workshop sought to develop a conceptual framework to support the network's development of a stronger shared sense of what we mean by teaching and of the nature of evidence we might expect to see to warrant claims of teaching quality and teaching excellence. The preliminary analysis revealed general agreement across the U21 network about the broad dimensions of teaching and learning but the different ways in which these dimensions were expressed, the considerable variety of evidence offered, and a lack of a clear sense of differential expectations by academic level led us to conclude that there would be value in developing a framework that gave us a clearer sense of our vision for teaching excellence. The matter of academic level was especially important given that one of the aims of the work is to inform judgments about promotion to Professor on teaching.

The conceptual framework has two elements – the dimensions of teaching and the levels at which those dimensions might be enacted.

#### *Dimensions of Teaching*

Using the Preliminary Report Analysis we refined the themes and sub-themes identified into four broad dimensions of teaching. These are listed below alongside the themes from the Preliminary Report. Because of the differences in classification of supervising graduate research students as a teaching activity in some universities and a research activity in others, there is no specific reference in these guidelines to the supervision of graduate research students although many of the dimensions can apply to this work.

*Table 2: Dimensions of Teaching Activity derived from preliminary analysis of selected U21 promotion policies and applications*

Dimensions of Teaching Activity	Related Preliminary themes
Student learning and engagement	Teaching Philosophy/Teaching Rationale Impact on Students
Enhancement of professional teaching practice	Improving/Developing Teaching
Design and development of curriculum, learning contexts and learning materials	Teaching Practice/Direct Contribution
Scholarship, dissemination and esteem	Dissemination of Excellence Knowledge Transfer Knowledge Exchange Esteem and recognition Funding

The first dimension foregrounds the purpose of teaching – to have a positive effect on student achievement and motivation. Data from the University of Glasgow show that students increasingly value teachers who can inspire and motivate (from 60% of responses from students about Best College Teacher in 2011-2012, to 85% in 2013-2014<sup>5</sup>). The second dimension follows logically from the first – to draw on evidence from students to improve their experience of, and success in, learning. But it also captures the sense of supporting and enabling the professional development of colleagues so that the learning experience of as many students as possible is optimized. The third dimension describes actions aimed at improving learning at the level of planning and design – developing resources, creating experiences, designing and testing innovations in curriculum, assessment and delivery. The fourth dimension is about extending the reach of teaching innovation beyond the immediate context within which it is enacted to advance, through peer review, critique and recognition, the field of knowledge about teaching and learning in higher education – to position teaching as a valued scholarly endeavor in a research-university environment.

#### *Levels of Enactment*

Each of the dimensions can be evidenced at different levels of intensity and scale. Because academic levels are typically a function of teaching and research we chose to describe the levels in terms of increasing responsibility – at the level of practice/practitioner, management/manager and leadership/leader. Implementation at the *practitioner* level refers to a focus on own practice; at the *manager* level to coordinating others and resources (doing things right); and at the *leader* level to envisioning change and engaging others with it (doing the right things).

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<sup>5</sup> Gunn, Vicky; Fischbacher-Smith, Moira; Jenkins, Alice; Stack, Niamh; Tierney, Anne; Friel, Niamh & Owen, Catherine (2014). *Recognising Teacher Excellence at the University of Glasgow*.

### Conceptual Framework

The intersection of dimensions of teaching and levels of enactment creates cells that describe the range and continuum of teaching excellence. The cells have been populated in the table below with examples of evidence drawn from the analysis of policies and promotion applications.

*Table 3: Examples of Evidence by Dimensions of Teaching and Levels of Engagement*

Dimensions of Teaching	Levels of Enactment		
	Practitioner Focus on own practice	Manager Coordinating others/resources	Leader Envisioning change and engaging others
Student learning and engagement	<p>A written statement about approach to teaching and reasons for that approach.</p> <p>Sustained teaching – e.g. courses taught, mix of undergraduate and postgraduate</p> <p>Excellent standard of teaching as evidenced by student results.</p> <p>Excellent standard of teaching as evidenced by student evaluations.</p> <p>Annotated examples of exemplary student work.</p> <p>Peer observation.</p> <p>Introduction of a significant new student support practice in own course/s.</p> <p>Giving feedback to students in clinical/field situations.</p>	<p>Contribution to a significant new student support practice in university – for example, peer mentoring.</p> <p>Contribution to the development of teaching and learning communities among students.</p> <p>Contribution to tutor training.</p> <p>Contribution to training of professionals in the field with a view to improving the student learning experience.</p> <p>Contribution as a Year level coordinator</p> <p>Organisation of engagement with external organisations for student practicum/internships.</p> <p>Managing the introduction of a new approach to teaching and learning in a department/Faculty.</p> <p>Course coordination and administration.</p> <p>Programme coordination and administration</p> <p>Development of a graduate capability framework.</p>	<p>Evidence of a major role in initiating a step change in teaching and learning and/or in curriculum.</p> <p>Membership of a national level teaching activity.</p> <p>Significant engagement with industry to establish a professional/internship/clinical programme.</p> <p>Contribution to development of teaching standards at national/international level.</p> <p>Awards or prizes won by students mentored.</p> <p>Distinguished subsequent achievements by graduate students.</p> <p>External examiner for postgraduate research work – thesis, dissertation – on teaching and learning.</p>



		Sustained record of engagement with the student body to enhance the student learning experience.	
<b>Enhancement of professional teaching practice</b>	<p>Evidence of changes in student achievement.</p> <p>Evidence of changes to practice as a result of peer observation.</p> <p>Completion of a qualification in teaching.</p> <p>Explaining the impact of a professional development programme on own teaching.</p> <p>Peer critique of teaching materials.</p> <p>Membership of, and contribution to, a Faculty committee on teaching and learning.</p> <p>Benchmarking course against similar courses to improve content and delivery.</p>	<p>Mentoring colleagues in teaching.</p> <p>Reviewing colleagues teaching.</p> <p>Bringing together a group of colleagues to discuss teaching – brown bag lunch.</p> <p>Organising sharing of case studies of teaching.</p> <p>Publications in in-house journals/magazines.</p> <p>Contribution to policy change in faculty, university as it relates to teaching and learning in high education.</p> <p>Evidence of improvements in teaching and learning in a role as a Director of Teaching or as a Head of Department.</p> <p>Chair a Board of Studies.</p> <p>Contribution to change in teaching policies at faculty or university level.</p> <p>Contribution to university teaching and learning network workshops</p> <p>Create artifacts that illustrate the value of teaching and share with colleagues.</p>	<p>Member/Leader of an organisation/national body with responsibility for advancing teaching and learning in high education.</p> <p>Contribution to policy change in teaching and learning at national level.</p>
<b>Design and development of curriculum, learning contexts and learning materials</b>	<p>Examples of course materials – annotated to identify key elements of learning design.</p> <p>Use of technology in teaching – e.g. LMS, simulations, Youtube, blogs</p> <p>Re-design of a course in a new way – e.g. MOOC development.</p> <p>Re-design of teaching materials/assessment tasks to improve engagement and success.</p>	<p>Redesigning the form of delivery of a programme – from face-to-face to online.</p> <p>Coordinating a department or cross-disciplinary teaching team.</p> <p>Contributing to/organising departmental reviews of teaching and programmes.</p> <p>Contributing to/organising an internal programme review.</p>	<p>Leading a major curriculum review.</p> <p>Invitation to review programmes in another university.</p> <p>Teaching materials adopted elsewhere – e.g. publication of a textbook – textbook sales; Youtube downloads or Likes.</p> <p>Creation of an internationally recognised programme.</p>

	<p>Publication of a text book.</p> <p>Examples of team teaching.</p> <p>Examples of cross-disciplinary teaching.</p>	<p>Design/development of a clinical/professional programme.</p>	
<p>Scholarship, dissemination and esteem</p>	<p>Winning an award for teaching and learning – department, faculty</p> <p>Winning a Teaching Fellowship</p>	<p>Organising a Faculty/university teaching and learning showcase – e.g. Tedx Terrytalks (UBC).</p> <p>Contribution to a university resource on teaching and learning.</p> <p>Membership/leadership of a university teaching and learning network.</p> <p>Invitation to judge a teaching competition in own faculty/university.</p> <p>Conference papers.</p> <p>Community outreach – e.g. contribution to school science fairs, subject teaching associations</p>	<p>International visiting professorships in teaching and learning.</p> <p>Invitations to deliver master classes on teaching and learning at international colloquia</p> <p>Media contributions/comments on teaching and learning.</p> <p>Invited lectures on pedagogy</p> <p>Invitation to join international research project on teaching and learning.</p> <p>Invitation to judge a national/international teaching competition.</p> <p>Youtube hits</p> <p>Activity on Twitter and on blogs about teaching and learning.</p> <p>Publication in journals on higher education teaching and learning.</p> <p>Authoring/editing books on teaching and learning.</p> <p>Teaching and learning journal editor.</p> <p>Membership/leadership of a national/international teaching and learning network</p> <p>Organising a national/international conference on teaching and learning.</p> <p>Contribution to policy change in a public body as it relates to teaching and learning in high education.</p> <p>Securing external funding for the development of a teaching project.</p> <p>Consultancy on teaching and learning.</p> <p>Successful commercialisation of a scholarship of teaching output – e.g. online resources or programme</p>

## **Application of the Framework**

As explained at the beginning of this paper the rationale at the outset of the project was to provide a basis for informed referee comment on applications for Professor in our various universities. It is not intended that the framework be used as a checklist for this purpose. It synthesizes practice across U21 universities in way that describes increasing scale of influence. It provides *examples* of evidence, not a comprehensive listing of expectations. It would be expected that those applying for promotion on teaching at the most senior levels would provide evidence to support claims about their personal excellence as practitioners and managers but it is at the level of leadership that we would expect to see the strongest evidence. Used in this way the framework could provide a basis for external reviewing of promotion applications on teaching and learning, and as a basis for judging U21 teaching awards.

As the framework developed it became clear that it also had a more enabling use than simply informing external refereeing of promotions or awards.

The framework could be used by *individual universities*:

- as a basis for discussing how to accord teaching the same esteem as accorded research
- to inform professional development provision
- to inform performance review processes
- to review their own promotion policies and practices

At *network level* the document could be used:

- as the basis for offering comment by members of the EI cluster on teaching standards and criteria as they are developed in individual universities

## **Next Steps**

Discussion of this paper at the U21 Educational Innovation workshop in Edinburgh on Wednesday 28 October with a review to further refinement as a basis for a statement on the U21 network's shared view of what we value in teaching and as a basis for developing an agreed process and set of criteria for external refereeing of promotion applications to Professor on teaching.